

## Appendix (2)

### **CEDAR HILLS TRANSPORTATION MEETING 8/23/01- 6pm**

#### I. Summary of comments received during public meeting:

- \* There are not that many new roads as compared to thirty years ago. The only road that has been extended is up past the water storage and on down the hill.
- \* If road is fixed, more traffic will occur
- \* Have asked for permission and hate to see the area shut off
- \* Would leasee be able to use closed roads or roads that are reclaimed.
- \* Roads with pipelines have been created and where the fire department went
- \* Need signs, like the loop road, would like to hunt area to the SW, road behind trailer be closed, don't spend money on the road.
- \* Sons aismatic and older people need roads, don't close roads, police each other, trash, and don't punish the honest hunters
- \* Doesn't mind closing roads, but resents the are being posted with illegal signs, need fines
- \* Are road closures for everyone (locked gates to the south)
- \* Trash in the area, need to police the area
- \* Locked gates are due to shot tank, livestock loss
- \* Improve the quality of hunting, sport hunting (1-mile roads)
- \* Police each other, and who can report and write citations
- \* Stolen property at trailer
- \* Goats - why and what impact do they have?
- \* Close road on west side
- \* Primitive weapons only
- \* Patrolling
- \* How many citations for last year NMDGF- 5, BLM - 2, Ask for permission to hunt (public or not)
- \* The are south of Cedar hill roads are worse, hunting is worse and need to take action, for closure
- \* have been going since a kid, to crazy out there now, started bow hunting and habitat is fine.
- \* Give the corns ½ permits and the public ½ permits
- \* For closing roads, property damage, and protect range improvements
- \* Cost of permits to hunt?
- \* illegal uses of the area and the dollars it would take to improve the area? Would force people elsewhere.
- \* Walk in are only - up by pinelodge road
- \* Like loop route, designate some campsites, pinelodge as an example.

#### II. Summary of comments received via mail:

Number of comments in favor of loop route # 5 = 7

Number of comments in favor of loop route # 3 = 1

### III. Other management recommendations:

- \* Handicapped hunter does not want all of the roads closed
- \* Limiting the number of users is a bad idea
- \* Check on the number of livestock on the place - looks like it is over-grazed
- \* Do not want to see the public lands locked up to where only the ranchers can use it.
- \* Need additional patrolling - 3
- \* Site people for trash and vandalism or not allow them to hunt
- \* No 4-wheelers during hunting season
- \* keep roads to a minimum
- \* C-2d should be part of the loop and remove C-2 from loop starting at intersections of C-2 and C-2d. South half of section 21 is Mark Marleys and hunters like to travel C-2d better.
- \* Close all of the following roads to everyone including the rancher: C-1d1, C-1d, C-2a, C-3a, C-2e, C2c1, C-4a, C-2d1, and C-2 from dirt tank south end to south fence.
- \* Close following roads but leave open for rancher: C-1a, C-1c, C-1b, C-1d, C-3, C-3b, C-4, C-2c, and C-5 (a must)
- \* Keep C4 & C3 open with turn arounds
- \* Do not maintain roads - brings more people in
- \* Do not need to drive everywhere to hunt.
- \* Sign the property boundaries -2
- \* \$ - wheelers allowed only to retrieve game
- \* NMDGF has too many deer hunts
- \* Additional fawn loss is occurring with net-wire along the highway. Have one side net and the other barbed wire.
- \* Camp sites should be located on or along C-1 and C-2b

### Synopsis

It sounds as though most people prefer the loop road. Some modifications to side roads and administrative roads will be looked at. Need to increase enforcement and patrolling (BLM and the public). Need to sign the area adequately with road closures and property ownership.

FOR  
CEDAR HILLS TRANSPORTATION PLAN

ON

ALLOTMENT 63048

EA-NM-060-2002-0043

NOVEMBER, 2001

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Roswell Field Office  
Roswell, New Mexico

## **I. Introduction**

The Cedar Hill area is located approximately 35 miles northwest of Roswell, NM along NM highway 246 (also known as Pine Lodge road). There is one legally accessible road off of the highway into the area. This road serves as the main access into the Cedar Hill area as well as access to a private residence located on the west side of the allotment. Land ownership in the

area consists of 4,145 acres of Public Land administered by the Bureau of Land Management Roswell Field Office, 740 acres of State Land administered by the New Mexico State Land Office, and 1,775 acres of private lands owned by Mike and Jennifer Corn. A very small parcel of private land on the south end of the allotment in the Salt Creek area is owned by Mark Marley.

The Cedar Hill area is unique because of the soils and vegetation found there are substantially different from that of much of the surrounding area. A large pocket of sand over limestone is the reason for the difference. Sand shinnery oak, juniper trees, and sumac are the vegetation species that differentiate this area. Also within this allotment is the Salt Creek drainage which further defines the area. Within the Salt Creek, vegetation such as desert willow, black walnut, and hackberry are found. West of the Salt Creek, upland grassland vegetation typical of shallow soil rangelands of southeast New Mexico exists.

The Cedar Hill area is utilized by the public for hunting, wildlife viewing, historic artifact hunting, camping, wood collection, and other recreational uses. Some of these activities are permitted and legal, while others occur in violation of laws and regulations. Damage to the area is occurring from the proliferation of roads due to public use. Each year, especially during the legal deer hunts, new roads are developed by off-road driving. Once a vehicle leaves an established road and leaves evidence of traffic, other people follow the trail and a new road is established. This leads to accelerated soil erosion in the area and disrupts wildlife and their habitat. Duplicate roads exist leading to the same destination as other roads, and roads that wander aimlessly and dead end. Vehicle traffic on roads that follow the path of water pipelines may also damage the pipe which leads to the inability to provide water for livestock and wildlife.

Livestock grazing is permitted on Public and State lands to Mike and Jennifer Corn. The Corn's are responsible for maintenance of existing range improvements within the area. These improvements are water pipelines, drinking troughs, and fences to facilitate management of the livestock. The water related improvements benefit wildlife as well as livestock by providing permanent water.

Instances where water pipelines or drinking troughs are damaged from vandalism or by vehicle traffic are costly. This is in terms of the expense involved to repair the damage as well as needless suffering by livestock and wildlife that are dependent on the water.

The private landowner and grazing permittee approached the BLM in 1999 about managing the public use of the area, and possibly closing some of the roads. During the 2000 deer hunt, the BLM installed a sign at the entrance to the area which included a map and text explaining legal use in the area and allowable use by motorized vehicles. A patrol of the area was also initiated during the hunting season to curtail off-road driving.

#### A. Purpose and Need for the Proposed Action

The actions described above have led to more awareness by the public, however, a long term access plan for the area needs to be developed. In order to facilitate the long term plan, the BLM inventoried and mapped all of the existing roads in the spring of 2001. On August 23, 2001, the

BLM held a public meeting to gather ideas, concerns and comments on the idea of implementing a transportation plan for the Cedar Hills Allotment/Deer Management Area. As a result of that meeting the following proposed action and alternatives have been derived.

#### B. Conformance with Land Use Planning

The Roswell Resource Management Plan (RMP) of October 1997 is the current planning document that covers this area. Page 48 of the RMP designates the Cedar Hill area as limited to existing roads and trails. At the time the RMP was written there was no road inventory for the Cedar Hill Area, however, page 47 outlines the need for site specific road designations.

Also within the RMP on page 58, the Cedar Hill area was identified as a mule deer management area.

The overall goal for big-game management is to maintain or improve habitat utilized by big game to provide sufficient quantity and quality of habitat (food, water, cover and space) necessary for population maintenance and expansion on public land, while providing for other land uses. The increased number of roads and habitat loss is working against this management goal.

#### C. Relationships to Statutes, Regulations, or Other Plans

### II. **Proposed Action and Alternatives**

#### A. Actions common to all Alternatives

1. Road Closures - Once roads are designated as closed to all uses, they would be obliterated (ripped) with heavy equipment and reclaimed by re-seeding, planting of native vegetation, and possibly brushing over. After the reclamation effort is completed, the Cedar Hills area would be placed into temporary vehicular closure (with the exception of private access to the residence in Section 8) for a period to allow vegetative recovery. Livestock grazing deferment will also be necessary to ensure reclamation efforts are effective. The purpose of road reclamation and the rest periods is to allow adequate ground cover to minimize soil erosion and to reduce the visibility of the closed roads. The area will be reopened to vehicle traffic and livestock use after the reclaimed areas are similar to the surrounding area. This process should occur in one normal growing season, but may take longer due to precipitation patterns and the response of vegetation. A field tour to determine road reclamation success will take place between the BLM resource staff and the permittee after each growing season.

Other activities such as wildlife habitat improvements and fuel reductions (prescribe fire) may be implemented to improve the overall health of the area. If possible, the BLM desires to implement the above mentioned activities within the road reclamation time frame to minimize disruption to the area for public access and livestock grazing.

2. Signing - Signs will be necessary to inform the public about changes in management of vehicle access. Signing will include a large entrance sign depicting route designations

and general recreational information . Signs along the route will include road closures, and markers to delineate the open route. Private land, leaving public land, state land and close gate signs will be used to minimize trespass issues.

3. Road Maintenance - Roads that are kept open for public use would be classified as a BLM resource category road. These roads would receive the necessary maintenance to prevent soil erosion and resource degradation. When deemed necessary, the BLM would maintain the bad portions of these roads by creating turnouts, blading, and if necessary apply caliche to the surface.

4. Compliance - BLM personnel would frequent the area during high use times to monitor use and ensure compliance. Other interested parties and agencies would also be able to patrol and relay information to the BLM about violations.

#### B. Proposed Action

The proposed action is to establish a loop road which would provide reasonable vehicular access to the entire area. From the loop route, recreationists would be able to access most if not all of the Cedar Hill area within a reasonable amount of walking time. Routes that form the loop would be C-1, C-2 , and C-2d shown on the map.

Roads C -1a, C-1d to water tank, C-3, C-3b, and C-4 would be closed to the general public, but would remain open to the permittee and BLM for administrative purposes. Steel gates or pipe barriers may need to be constructed to close these roads.

The following roads would be entirely closed to all uses. C-1b, C-1c, C-1d beyond water tank, C-1d1, the south portion of C-2 past the junction of C-2d, C-2a, C-2b, C-2c, C-2c1, C-2d1, C-2e, C-3a, C-4a, and C-5. These roads (public surface) would be signed, ripped up, bermed, water-barred, re-seeded , brushed over or a combination of all of the above.

#### C. Close the Entire Area Alternative

Under this alternative the entire area would be closed to the public for vehicle traffic. A parking lot with small horse gates at Pine Lodge Road would be provided, and the roads not used by the permittee as described above would be reclaimed.

#### D. Limit the Number of Users Alternative

Under this alternative a limited number of people or user groups would be allowed to use the area during heavily utilized periods. This alternative would limit vehicle use to individuals with a permit or license. Only those individuals with a permit to graze, or those licensed hunters who have signed up with the BLM would have permission to utilize the area for a specific hunt.

Due to the amount of public controversy and interest that was shown at the public scoping meeting, alternatives C and D will not be addresses at this time. However, if in the future additional management above and beyond what has been identified in the proposed action is needed to manage those resources impacted; then other alternatives or modifications to the proposed action will be looked at.

#### E. No Action Alternative

This alternative would leave the management of the area as it currently is. Roads would remain open and new roads, or extending existing roads would continue as a result of off-road driving. Under this alternative rangeland health would continue to decline. Due to guidance within the Roswell RMP and the standards for rangeland health, this issue must be addressed. Therefore this alternative will not be implemented or analyzed any further.

### III. Affected Environment

#### A. General Setting

Allotment #63048 (Cedar Hill Ranch) is located in Lincoln county approximately 35 miles Northwest of Roswell. This allotment consists of 4,145 acres of public land, 740 acres of state land and 1035 acres of private land. There is also approximately 25 acres of private land within the boundaries of the allotment that is owned by an individual other than the allottee.

The Cedar Hill area is characterized by sandy soils and sandhills underlain with caliche material. Brush species such as juniper, oak and sumac are prevalent in the area. The Salt Creek drainage traverses the Cedar Hill allotment. More detailed information of the area is discussed under the affected resources section.

#### B. Affected Resources

The following resources or values are not present or would not be affected: Prime/Unique Farmland, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, Minority/Low Income Populations, Wild and Scenic Rivers, Hazardous/Solid Wastes, Wetlands/Riparian Zones, Threatened and Endangered Species, Native American Religious Concerns. Cultural inventory surveys would continue to be required for public actions involving surface disturbing activities.

1. Soils: In general, the soils in the area are Threadgill-Asparas-Gabaldon series and the Darvey-Deama-Pastura series. The soils vary from shallow to deep, are well drained, and found on hilly to nearly level areas. The soils are derived predominately from limestone. For in depth soil information, please refer to the Soil Survey of Chaves County New Mexico, Northern Part, or the Soil Survey of Lincoln County, New Mexico, published by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). A copy of these publications may be reviewed at the BLM Roswell Field Office or at a local NRCS office.

2. Vegetation: This area is within the grassland, shinnery oak dune, and mixed desert shrub vegetative communities as identified in the Roswell Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS). Vegetative communities managed by the Roswell Field Office are identified and explained in the RMP/EIS. Appendix 11 of the draft RMP/EIS describes the Desired Plant Community (DPC) concept and identifies the components of each community.

3. Wildlife: This allotment is within the Macho Habitat Management Area. Game species occurring within the area include mule deer, mourning dove, and scaled quail. Raptors that utilize the area on a more seasonal basis include the Swainson's, red-tailed, and ferruginous hawks, American kestrel, and great-horned owl. Numerous passerine birds utilize the grassland areas due to the variety of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. The most common include the western meadowlark, mockingbird, horned lark, killdeer, loggerhead shrike, and vesper sparrow.

The warm prairie environment supports a large number of reptile species compared to higher elevations. The more common reptiles include the short-horned lizard, lesser earless lizard, eastern fence lizard, coachwhip, bullsnake, prairie rattlesnake, and western rattlesnake.

A general description are recorded that are of wildlife occupying or potentially utilizing the proposed action area is located in the Affected Environment Section (p. 3-62 to 3-71) of the Draft Roswell RMP/EIS (9/1994).

The Cedar Hill allotment is located within the Cedar Hill Mule Deer management area as identified by the Roswell RMP. Aerial surveys conducted by the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish indicates that the mule deer population remains stable, but the buck/doe/fawn ratios have slightly declined in the past eight years. The primary goal is to maintain or improve habitat utilized by big game to provide sufficient quantity and quality of food, water, cover and space while providing for livestock grazing. Adequate forage (browse), water and seclusion areas are critical elements for managing mule deer within the area. Utilization of key browse species by livestock may need to be monitored to ensure forage is available for wildlife. Future habitat enhancement projects may be implemented to improve the habitat for deer in the area. Along with the closing of roads, other examples of projects include the construction new water locations and prescribed fire to stimulate more palatable forage.

4. Livestock Management: The area is operated as a cow/calf, sheep and goat ranch. The Cedar Hill allotment consists of two pastures (previously one of the pastures was split by an electric fence) and one trap. Water wells, pipeline systems and earthen reservoirs provide livestock water throughout the allotment. During periods of drought, livestock numbers are reduced on the allotment for conservation of forage.

The various classes of livestock complicate rotation patterns due to the differing needs



throughout the year.

5. Visual Resources: The allotment is located within a Class III and IV Visual Resource Management areas. The class III areas are along NM Highway 48 (Pine Lodge Road), and the Class IV areas are located in the interior of the allotment. The Class III rating means that contrasts to the basic elements caused by a management activity may be evident and begin to attract attention in the landscape. The changes, however should remain subordinate to the existing landscape. The class IV rating means that contrasts may attract attention and be a dominant feature in the landscape in terms of scale. However, the changes should repeat the basic elements of the landscape.

6. Water Quality: No perennial surface water is found on the Public Land on this allotment.

7. Air Quality: Air quality in the region is generally good. The allotment is in a Class II area for the Prevention of Significant Deterioration of air quality as defined in the public Clean Air Act. Class II areas allow a moderate amount of air quality degradation.

8. Recreation: Since this allotment has no facility based recreational activities, only dispersed recreational opportunities occur on these lands. Recreational activities that may occur include hunting, caving, sightseeing, Off Highway Vehicle Use (on existing roads and trails), primitive camping, horseback, hiking and other activities.

Legal and physical Access to public lands located in this allotment are through state lands, county maintained roads and roads existing on public lands. Off Highway Vehicle designation for public lands within this allotment are classified as "Limited" to existing roads and trails.

9. Cave/Karst: This allotment is located within a designated area of high karst and cave potential. A complete significant cave or karst inventory has not been completed for the public lands located in this grazing allotment. No significant caves or karst features are known to exist within this allotment.

10. Floodplains: Within this allotment, floodplains exist in the area and are recorded on Federal Emergency Management Agency maps. The identified floodplains are those mentioned under the general setting above. Water pipelines and fences cross the floodplains within this allotment. Any future permanent structures or improvements will be analyzed on a site specific basis prior to approval within the floodplains.

#### IV. Environmental Impacts

##### A. Impacts of the Proposed Action

1. Soils - The reclamation of roads will in the short term have a negative effect on soils and will increase the ability for soil erosion created by intense rain storms during the summertime and high winds early in the spring of the year. A long term positive impact to soils is the reseeding and stabilization of approximately 6 miles of

eroding two-tracks which will indirectly halt the extension of increased roads and the negative impact that has on soil resources.

2. Vegetation - Impacts to vegetation will be minimal in the reclamation of roads. Vegetation will be improved on those roads that are reseeded. The long term positive impact to vegetation will be the reduced trampling and disturbance that is created as a result of off road vehicles.
3. Wildlife - The only negative impact to wildlife will be disturbance and displacement that will result during the reclamation and reseeding of roads. Displacement and excessive disturbance to wildlife occurs primarily during the hunting season. The proposed action will reduce and in some cases eliminate these negative impacts. With the closing and reseeding of roads deer habitat will be improved, by increasing the area deer will have to escape and forage in.
4. Livestock Management - Under the proposed action, overall livestock numbers will not be effected. However, during the reclamation of roads, changes in livestock management will be needed to implement a rotation during the reseeding and reclamation of roads. Livestock will be deferred during the growing season. Livestock use will be allowed after the reclaimed area is similar to the surrounding area. This process should occur in one normal growing season, but may take longer due to precipitation patterns and the response of vegetation. A field tour to determine road reclamation success will take place between the BLM resource staff and the permittee after each growing season. The reclamation of roads and the deferment of pastures from livestock use will need to be alternated to where the permittee is not required to be out of each pasture the same time or year
5. Visual Resources - No negative impacts to visual resources will result from the proposed action. Positive impacts will occur by reducing the amount of roads that will be visible to the general public.
6. Air Quality - No substantial positive or negative impacts to air quality will result from the proposed action. Air quality may be slightly improve by reducing the amount of blowing sand on reclaimed roads.
7. Recreation - Recreational opportunities and uses by the general public will not change. By reducing the number of roads, the quality of recreational hunting will be improved.
8. Cave/Karst - No impacts to cave/karst resources are anticipated. No significant features have been located within this allotment at this time.
9. Floodplains - Sedimentation into floodplains will be decreased by limiting the amount of surface disturbance and the reclamation of roads. No direct impact to the floodplain is anticipated since no new roads will be constructed in the floodplain area. .

#### B. Impacts from the No Action Alternative

Under the proposed action negative impacts would continue for all of the affected resources mentioned above. Continued use of the existing roads and their subsequent extensions have negative impacts on soils with increased erosion which also effects vegetation, air quality, and wildlife habitat. Wildlife in general would continue to be harassed and displaced during the high recreational periods.

Under this alternative no changes in livestock management would be needed, so a positive impact to the permmittee would occur as compared to the proposed action.

## **V. Cumulative Impacts**

A cumulative impact is defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time” (40 CFR 1508.7).

The analysis of cumulative impacts is driven by major resource issues. The action considered in this environmental assessment (EA) is the closing of fragmented roads on the Cedar Hill allotment and the major issue includes:

The protection of natural resources and mule deer habitat within the allotment area. Other BLM actions that could have impacts on the identified resource include: Livestock grazing and recreational use, primarily hunting and subsequent cross country driving. on this allotment and other allotments adjacent to this area.

All authorized activities which occur on BLM land can also take place on state and private lands, with the possibility of decreased management towards these resources. Many of the actions which could contribute to cumulative impacts have occurred over many years. Impacts from open-range, and OHV are still being addressed today and may continue on adjacent lands

The proposed action and alternatives would not add incrementally to the cumulative impacts to sensitive species or to the overall rangeland health. If the No-Grazing alternative were chosen, adverse cumulative impacts to resource would continue.

## **VI. Residual Impacts**

The area has been extensively used by all types of recreationists as well as livestock for many years. Under the proposed action some of the impacts will be reduced overtime, but recreational and livestock use will continue to occur but under more intensive management. Given the nature of the proposed action there will be no foreseeable residual impacts anticipated as long as the mitigating measures that are built in to the proposed action are enacted.

## **VII. Mitigating Measures**

Recreational monitoring of the success of closing roads will be conducted. No heavy equipment or reclamation will occur during extensive wet periods to reduce the amount of soil erosion that could occur. Once the proposed action is implemented, if new information as to other roads or maintenance is needed to protect those resources impacted the action will be taken to mitigate those impacts.

#### **VIII. Persons Contacted and Coordinated With**

Public Meeting -

Mike and Jennifer Corn - permittee

Chuck Schmidt - Rangeland Management Specialists

Jerry Ballard - Outdoor Recreation Planner

Tim Kreager - Assistant Field Office Manager - Resources

## **DECISION RECORD**

Reference: Environmental Assessment (EA) for Cedar Hills Transportation Plan NM-060-2002-0043

The above mentioned EA was sent out to 29 different interested parties for review and comment on May 1, 2002. Comments were received from the New Mexico State Land Office, and Paul & Jane Nevarez who own property adjacent to the Cedar Hills allotment. Comments received supported the proposed action, therefore there will be no changes made to the Environmental Assessment.

**Decision:** It is my decision to implement the proposed action as described in EA # NM-060-2002-0043. The proposed action will establish a loop road which would provide reasonable vehicular access to the entire area. From the loop route, recreationists will be able to access most if not all of the Cedar Hill area within a reasonable amount of walking time. Routes that form the loop would be C-1, C-2, and C-2d shown on the map.

Roads C-1a, C-1d to water tank, C-3, C-3b, and C-4 will be closed to the general public, but would remain open to the permittee and BLM for administrative purposes. Steel gates or pipe barriers may need to be constructed to close these roads.

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1. Road Closures - Once roads are designated as closed to all uses, they would be obliterated (ripped) with heavy equipment and reclaimed by re-seeding, planting of native vegetation, and possibly brushing over. After the reclamation effort is completed, the Cedar Hills area would be placed into temporary vehicular closure (with the exception of private access to the residence in Section 8) for a period to allow vegetative recovery. Livestock grazing deferment will also be necessary to ensure reclamation efforts are effective. The purpose of road reclamation and the rest periods is to allow adequate ground cover to minimize soil erosion and to reduce the visibility of the closed roads. The area will be reopened to vehicle traffic and livestock use after the reclaimed areas are similar to the surrounding area. This process should occur in one normal growing season, but may take longer due to precipitation patterns and the response of vegetation. A field tour to determine road reclamation success will take place between the BLM resource staff and the permittee after each growing season.

Other activities such as wildlife habitat improvements and fuel reductions (prescribe fire) may be implemented to improve the overall health of the area. If possible, the BLM desires to implement the above mentioned activities within the road reclamation time frame to minimize disruption to the area for public access and livestock grazing.

2. Signing - Signs will be necessary to inform the public about changes in management

of vehicle access. Signing will include a large entrance sign depicting route designations and general recreational information . Signs along the route will include road closures, and markers to delineate the open route. Private land, leaving public land, state land and close gate signs will be used to minimize trespass issues.

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4. Compliance - BLM personnel would frequent the area during high use times to monitor use and ensure compliance. Other interested parties and agencies would also be able to patrol and relay information to the BLM about violations.

/s/T R Kreager

T.R. Kreager,                      Date  
Assistant Field Office Manager-Resources

6/10/02